

Statement of Introduction
Continuing Care for Recovering Families Act
Rep. Edward J. Markey
February 1, 2005

It has only been a couple months since we commemorated the third anniversary of the most devastating attack against our country since Pearl Harbor. It was a solemn day and an occasion to remember the men and women who perished on that clear Tuesday morning. For the families of the victims, September 11 will always be a difficult date on the calendar. Like the World Trade Center families, the Pentagon families, and the families of first responders, the families of the greater Boston area experienced this tragedy personally as two of the four planes involved took off from Logan Airport carrying their loved ones.

Unfortunately, for many of these brave families, their difficult days are not over. Many of the families who continue to struggle are now faced with the loss of their eligibility through the low-cost COBRA health insurance program.

The COBRA program is intended to provide stability to families as they go through a major life transition, and for 120 days following the trauma of September 11th, it provided critical health insurance for families in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Virginia, and elsewhere who lost a loved one. This temporary assistance has already expired for many of these families and without this legislation, more families will lose their eligibility. Without the security of this program they must struggle to find affordable coverage in the private market, pay enormous health care premiums or go without health insurance.

The families who had their loved ones taken away on September 11th have suffered and lost enough. The least we can do for these brave Americans is provide them with continued access to stable and affordable health insurance.

That is why Senator Kennedy and I are introducing the “Continuing Care for Recovering Families Act.” This legislation will allow families of victims of September 11th to buy health care coverage under the federal COBRA program – the temporary low-cost continuation of coverage available for those who change their job, lose their job or for families that lose their chief income earner through death.

The families who lost their loved ones on September 11th continue to face the hardship and trauma of that devastating day with courage and determination. We should do whatever we can to ease the pain of these brave Americans, and I am proud to be introducing legislation today with Senator Kennedy to provide these families with continued access to low-cost, quality health care.

I urge the Congress to act quickly to ensure that these brave families not have to go without the security and piece of mind that medical insurance provides.